Indiana Department of Education

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

Response to Instruction (RtI) Guidance Document, (2010)

Indiana Department of Education
SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

May 17, 2010

Dear Indiana Educators and Administrators:

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is pleased to announce the *Response to Instruction (RtI) Guidance Document,* (2010). This document is designed to facilitate and assist Indiana educators in implementing *RtI*. It is my hope that each school corporation will take advantage of the opportunity to use the supports and tools available in developing and implementing *RtI*.

Never before, in the history of our state, have the stakes been higher for Indiana's educational system. We must develop and execute a plan that puts student achievement in its rightful place at the top of the nation and on par with the rest of the world. Through *RtI*'s emphasis on the integration and collaboration of program areas, the application of a problem-solving approach, the use of evidence-based instruction, setting individual student learning goals, and data-based decision making, educational outcomes will improve.

While school corporations develop *RtI* according to local decisions based on culture, resources, and needs, certain components are critical for *RtI* to be successful. The components discussed in this document are considered to be essential and non-negotiable for full implementation and long-term sustainability to occur. It is my belief that rigorous adherence to the components of *RtI* will promote the highest possible academic achievement for all Indiana students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tony Bennett
Indiana State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Contents

Introduction

As all schools and school corporations move to the implementation of *Response to Instruction* (*RtI*), the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) sought to provide guidance to assist in that endeavor. The purpose of Indiana's *Response to Instruction Guidance Document,* (2010) is to define and establish a set of common principles of *RtI*, which were gathered from national professional organizations and other state departments of education. IDOE's *RtI* Committee, consisting of IDOE staff and external partners (see appendix), extensively reviewed documents, conducted discussions, and determined the critical information to be included in this document. The document provides an initial introduction to *RtI* in Indiana and a description of its essential components as well as how the guidance can be implemented at the district and school levels.

Often *RtI* is the acronym for "Response to Intervention," referring to how teachers and other staff will "intervene" in order to increase students' learning. However, IDOE's *RtI* Committee chose different wording for the acronym—*Response to Instruction*—which places the emphasis on how teachers will continually change and adapt their instruction to correspond to individual student needs. Even though the difference is subtle, the committee believed strongly that *Response to Instruction* conveyed the message of teachers' focus on instruction as the key to improved student learning.

A. Definition of *Response to Instruction*

RtI is the systemic process of meeting the educational needs of all students through professional accountability to ensure:

- Delivery of scientific, research-based core curriculum and instruction
- Ongoing monitoring of student data to assess the effectiveness of instruction
- Determination and delivery of targeted and intensive individualized student supports

***RtI* Is …**	***RtI* Is Not …**
A systemic process that aligns all school improvement goals	A special education initiative
Intent on ensuring all students meet or exceed proficiency standards	Intent on decreasing or increasing special education numbers
An instructional model designed to benefit all students through greater continuity of services	A product or kit to add on to the daily routine
Focused on effective instruction to enhance the academic learning of all students	Focused on documentation of evidence to remove a student from general education

B. Distinctions in *Response to Instruction*

As described in the introduction, the acronym for *RtI* for many educational entities is "Response to Intervention." However, IDOE has selected the terminology "*Response to Instruction"* (*RtI*) to indicate the focus on all learners, on teaching and learning, and on the critical role of the teacher in providing the most appropriate instruction. In this and other ways, *Response to Instruction* is distinct from the traditional educational approaches and outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Distinctions in *RtI* and Traditional Approaches

Traditional Approach	*Response to Instruction*
Students who are unsuccessful with the core curriculum are referred to and often placed in special programs that include instruction in pull-out classrooms.	When students are unsuccessful in the core curriculum or have demonstrated proficiency, their teachers review the student data and adjust instructional practices including intensity and duration to meet the students' goals.
Teachers primarily use the same instructional methods for all students.	Teachers modify, support, and extend instructional practices based on individual student goals/needs.
Student growth and needs are determined sporadically and/or over extended periods of time (e.g., end-of-semester exams; ISTEP+).	Student growth and goals are measured weekly or biweekly through formative assessments and progress monitoring.
Data review and instructional decisions are made in isolation by individual teachers.	Data analysis and instructional decisions are made through discussions in school teams.
Special education teachers hold the main responsibility for students who are not succeeding in the core curriculum.	All teachers are responsible for meeting the goals of all students with program specific teachers (e.g., special education, Title I, ELL, special area, high ability, and instructional coaches) being integrated with classroom teachers to implement the tiers of instructional support.

C. Indiana's Context

In determining how to adopt and adapt the concept of *RtI*, each state, district, and school needs to make decisions within its own context. As IDOE and the *RtI* Committee examined Indiana's context, they noted a strong alignment to the vision expressed by Tony Bennett, Ed.D., Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction:

> The academic achievement and career preparation of all Indiana students will be the best in the United States and on par with the most competitive countries in the world.

RtI greatly increases the likelihood of improved student achievement by identifying struggling students at the earliest grade levels and providing them with additional instructional time and intensity during the school day. It also provides more advanced curriculum and additional instructional time and intensity to those who are proficient and need extended learning. With *RtI*, students are monitored often to ensure they are progressing, and when they are not, they receive

additional learning opportunities. These essential components, as well as strong leadership at all levels and a deep commitment toward change by all educators are critical keys to improving the achievement of Indiana students.

As Indiana is diverse in urban, suburban, and rural populations, in geographic areas, and in available resources, no two schools or districts will necessarily implement *RtI* in the same way. In addition, schools are at different stages of implementing *RtI*. Thus, the *Guidance Document* offers a conceptual framework and valuable information on developing, designing, and implementing best practices of *RtI* to increase student achievement, while individual schools and districts determine the specific details of the implementation and ensure that all components are included.

IDOE views *RtI* as a means to provide support for all students to achieve their learning goals. For students struggling in a certain area, a specific intervention may address the learning difficulty. Students who are already proficient in an area may be provided with challenges that are differentiated for pace, content, and complexity. *RtI* in Indiana is about all learners, K–12, and all students achieving their goals.

D. Core Principles

Providing the foundation for the components of *RtI*, the following guiding principles represent the beliefs of the IDOE and research regarding *RtI*. The statements below should be pivotal to school and district implementation.

Indiana Department of Education: *RtI* Belief Statements

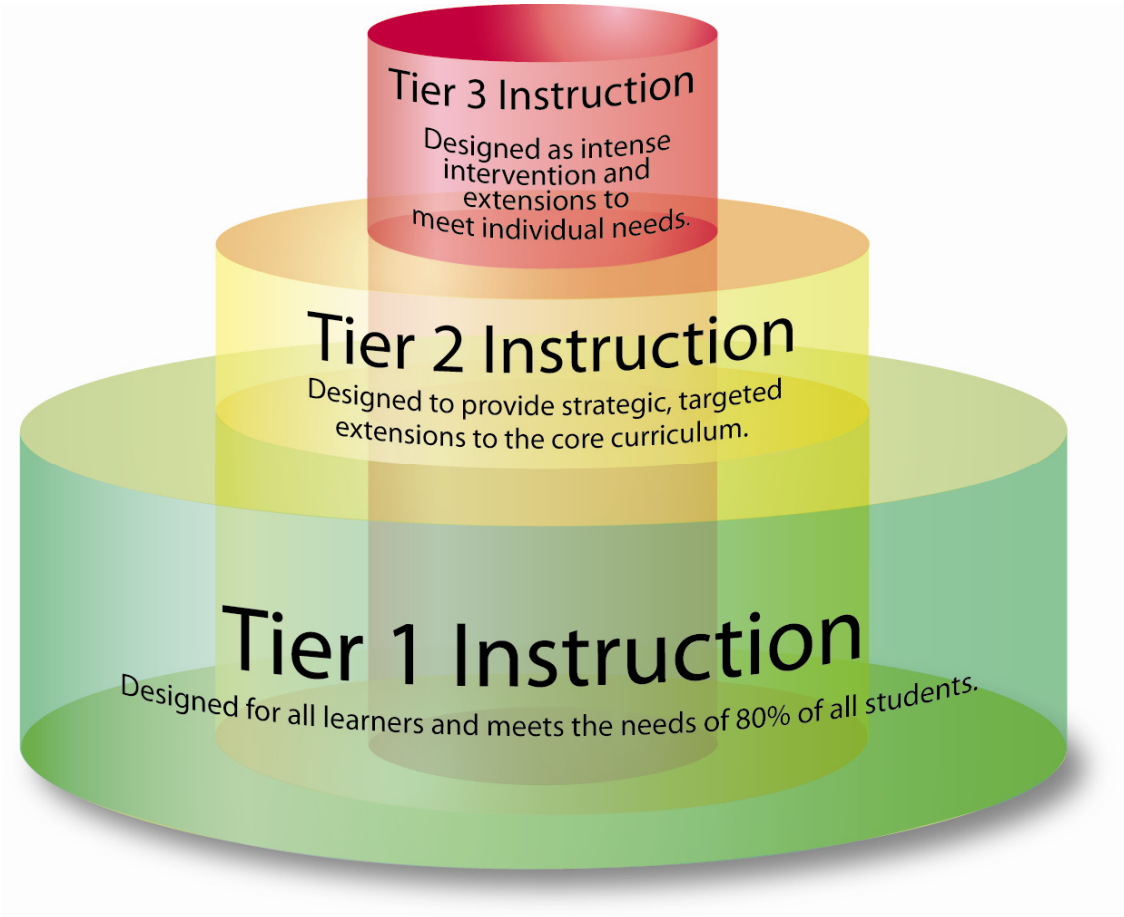
1. We believe teachers can teach all students so they achieve their learning goals.
2. We believe that strong leadership at the state, district, and school levels is essential to improving teaching and learning.
3. We believe that the analysis of student data by administrators and teachers should guide curricular and instructional decisions.
4. We believe that effective teachers use research-based interventions and instructional practices, including extensions to the core curriculum in order to provide greater challenge and rigor.
5. We believe that effective teachers actively learn about their students' cultures and seek to move from awareness to acceptance and appropriate responsiveness by adapting curriculum and instruction to take into account students' cultures.
6. We believe that schools must proactively involve parents and other community members to meet the needs of all learners.
7. We believe teachers must meet in school teams to engage in frequent discussion regarding student performance data.

Maximizing Student Instruction

A. Three-Tier Instructional Model

Indiana's *RtI* provides a framework for delivering comprehensive, high-quality instruction for all learners, kindergarten through high school (see Figure 1). The framework consists of three levels or tiers that are fluid and overlapping. The tiers provide various levels of support to students in terms of duration and intensiveness. The more instructional support needed, the higher up on the model the student moves. Teachers using *RtI* utilize research-based instructional practices, targeted interventions, and curricular enhancements to support students in accomplishing their individual learning goals and include innovative scheduling and resource allocations. Fluidity and flexibility within and between the instructional tiers are critical to students' receiving the supports they need. Every student is given an opportunity to meet or exceed proficiency standards by teachers utilizing data in an effective and collaborative decision-making process, which results in differentiating instructional practices for all learners.

Figure 1. Three-Tier Instructional Model



Tier 1: Core Classroom Instruction

Tier 1 Instruction refers to research-based core classroom curriculum and instruction for all learners that focus on the essential elements of a subject. Designed to meet the needs of least 80 percent of all students, Tier 1 provides the foundation for instruction upon which all interventions are formulated. Pre-assessment data drive differentiated instructional decisions based on evidence of proficiency or evidence of difficulty. Identified students with high abilities in a particular subject or content are grouped together in one class (cluster group, multi-age, self-contained) to receive a more advanced core curriculum with accelerated and more in-depth instruction. Pre-assessment data are used to find additional students who need advanced instruction.

Tier 2: Targeted Instruction

Students who are struggling with content instruction in Tier 1 are considered in need of additional support in Tier 2. Tier 2 Instruction provides strategic, targeted extensions in addition to the core curriculum and instruction present at Tier 1. Data from consistent progress monitoring are used to guide the intensity, duration, and frequency of instruction and vary based on individual learning goals. For students performing below grade level, Tier 2 is intended to remediate deficiencies and provide the support needed to be successful in Tier 1. For students exceeding the higher level expectations of the advanced core, Tier 2 is designed to provide further challenges that are differentiated for pace, content, and complexity in the core subject.

Tier 3: Intensive Instruction

Tier 3 Instruction provides intense intervention to target specific, individual student needs. It goes beyond the instructional and differentiated practices typical of those within Tier 1 or Tier 2. For students with the most significant needs, this requires explicit, intensive, and specifically designed lessons in addition to Tier I and in place of Tier 2 Instruction. This intensive level of instruction utilizes a combination of research and evidence-based practices, a rigorous curriculum, a positive learning environment, and frequent assessments to ensure the needs of all students are met.

If a student has not made adequate progress after an appropriate period of time and has been provided with appropriate instruction as described in Indiana Academic Code, (See Appendix document: Indiana Article 7: Parent Notification Pertaining to Intervention/Extension Instruction), a request for an educational evaluation may be initiated.

For students with high abilities, Tier 3 might require intensive instruction and/or highly individualized challenges. The intensive instruction is designed to accelerate students' learning in the specific area(s) of need.

Tier 1: Core Instruction

Tier 1 Instruction is data driven and designed to meet the needs of all learners. Research-based curriculum and instructional practices are provided to teach all elements in core content areas (see Figure 2 and Table 2).

Figure 2. Tier 1 Instruction

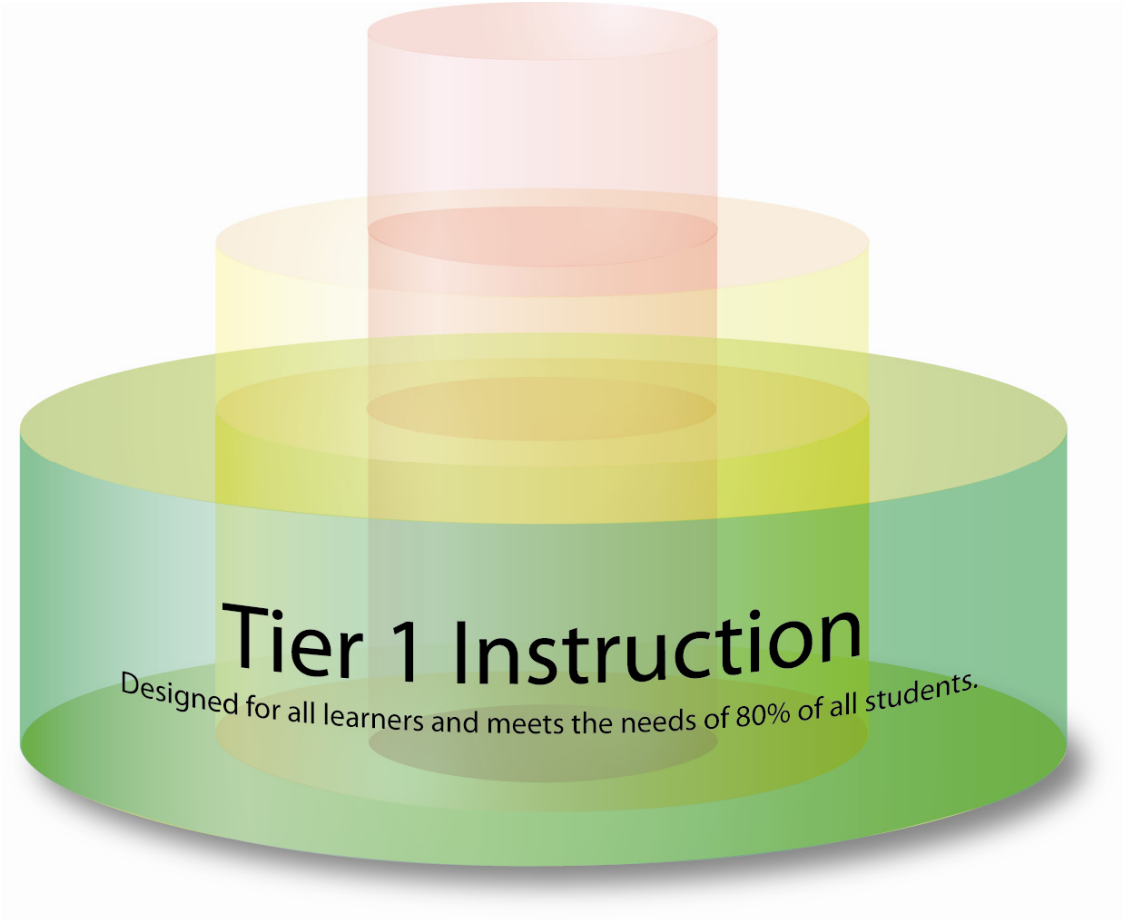


Table 2. Descriptions of Tier 1 Elements

Feature	Definition
Materials	• Research-based core curricula and differentiated instructional materials (including English language development, ELD, curricula for English language learning students) • Above-grade-level materials used within advanced core
Instructional Organization	• Whole group instruction of strategies, processes, skills, and content • Differentiated, flexible groups determined by benchmark and progress monitoring data for application of skills, re-teaching, additional practice, compacting and/or challenge activities, and/or English language development instruction. • For ELL students, ELD instruction is provided within the 90 minute reading block for elementary and is a stand-alone course for secondary (see FAQ for details)
Instructional Responsibility	• Highly qualified classroom teacher with the training and background required to implement research-based practices for all learners, including students with needs above or below grade-level curriculum and those with limited English proficiency • An ELL teacher with specialized training to provide ELD instruction and who coordinates with classroom teachers to implement the tiers of instructional support • High-ability licensed teacher for identified high-ability students grouped together in one class (cluster group, multi-age, self-contained); could be in partnership with content expert
Assessment	• Pre and post assessment is needed in order to plan instruction • Benchmark data, progress monitoring data, diagnostic assessment data, including assessments of above or below grade-level standards inform instruction • Summative assessment is needed to determine student mastery and is one of the components for determining student grades • Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individual Learning Plan (ILP) receive accommodations according to their plans
Parent Communication	• Consistent communication with parents regarding student progress and academic needs
Scheduling	• Tier 1 Instruction occurs daily in the general education classroom • Elementary Reading: 90-minute uninterrupted block • Elementary Mathematics: 60-minute uninterrupted block • Secondary Schools: Tier 1 occurs during the regular class period • ELL students participate in the 90 minute block; ELL students must receive instruction that provides frequent opportunities for oral language development.

Tier 2: Targeted Instruction

Tier 2 instruction is scaffolded to provide additional research-based instruction beyond the core curriculum. The duration, intensity, and frequency of instruction are increased during this tier based on progress monitoring data. For students with learning difficulties or other special instructional needs such as English Language Learners (ELLs), Tier 2 is intended to remediate deficiencies and provide the support needed to be successful in Tier 1. For students with high abilities and others exceeding advanced expectations, Tier 2 is designed to provide further challenges that are differentiated for pace, content, and complexity.

Figure 3. Tier 2 Instruction

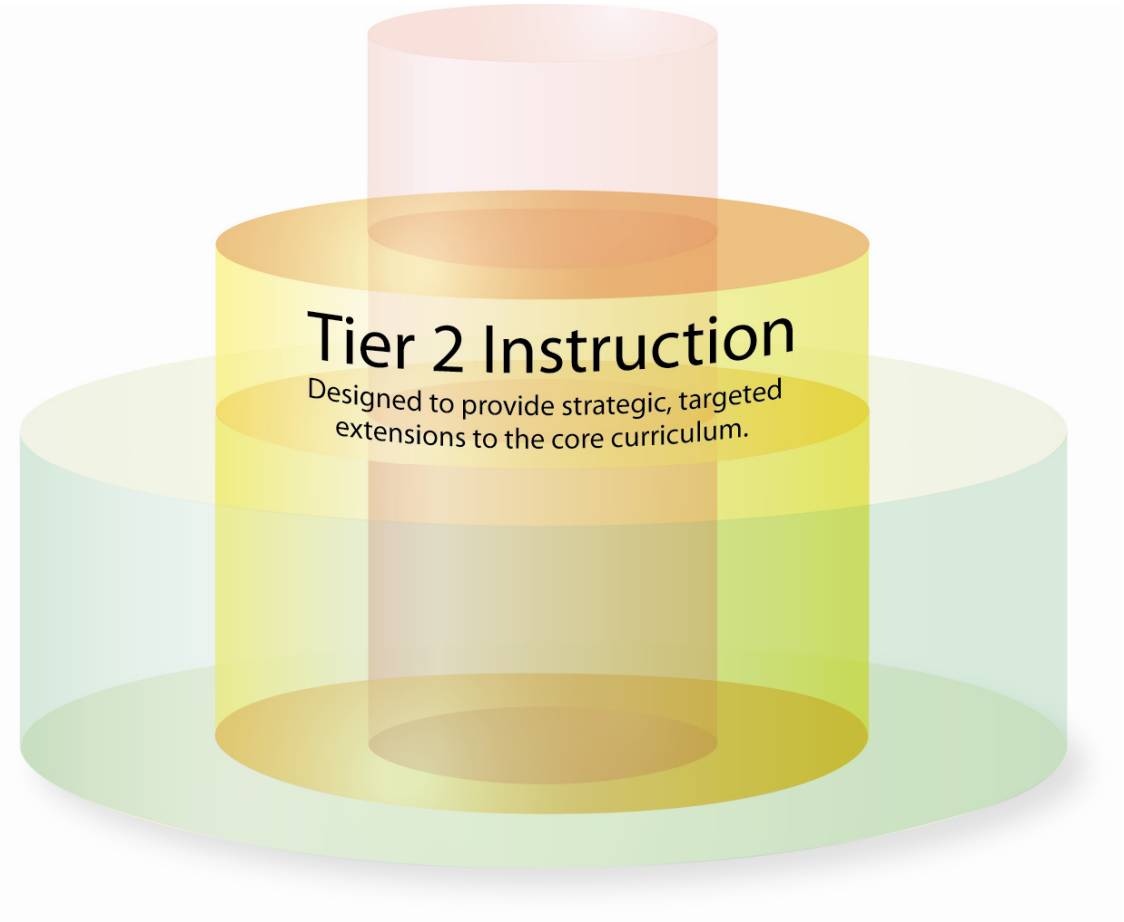


Table 3. Descriptions of Tier 2 Elements

Feature	Definition
Materials	• Research-based instructional materials aligned to Tier 1 core curriculum (e.g., for ELL students, ELD instructional materials designed to remediate language and content deficiencies). • Selected to match student need based on progress monitoring and other data • Above grade level materials used within advanced core
Instructional Organization	• Small, homogeneous groups incorporating multisensory approaches as appropriate • Differentiated instruction increases in depth and intensity and is determined using benchmark and progress monitoring data • Frequent opportunities for students to apply their learning • Scaffolded critical and creative thinking • For ELL students, the focus of ELD instruction is a continuation and intensification of Tier 1 to remediate language and content deficiencies
Instructional Responsibility	• Highly qualified teacher, in partnership with content and program area specialist, or other appropriate certified personnel • High ability licensed teacher for identified high ability students grouped together in one class (cluster group, multi-age, self-contained); could be in partnership with content expert • Additional opportunities for support provided by trained personnel and supervised by licensed staff
Assessment	• Diagnostic assessment and on-going progress monitoring to determine growth and make targeted instructional decisions (frequency is at least monthly)
Parent Communication	• Required written notification to parent (communicated in the native language when necessary) when a student experiences academic difficulty and requires an intervention that is not provided to all students in the general education classroom. (See Appendix: Indiana Article 7: Parent Notification Pertaining to Intervention/Extension Instruction.)
Scheduling	• Students who need reinforcement of skills or additional extension instruction, in addition to Tier 1 receive up to 30 minutes daily (or duration according to research-based program implementation) • In secondary, students may receive additional time through a lab class, basic skills class, guided study, or an extended school day • For students with high ability, vertical or more in-depth extensions to the curriculum add further challenge to concepts during additional extension instruction.

Tier 3: Intensive Instruction

Tier 3 Instruction involves research-based, intensive, targeted interventions for students with needs that are not adequately addressed in Tiers 1 and 2 (see Figure 4 and Table 4). For students with the greatest learning challenges, this could require explicit, intensive and specifically designed lessons. For high ability students, this could require intensive instruction and/or highly individualized challenges. Frequent progress monitoring provides data that drives customized strategies to assure that the needs of these students are met.

Figure 4. Tier 3 Instruction

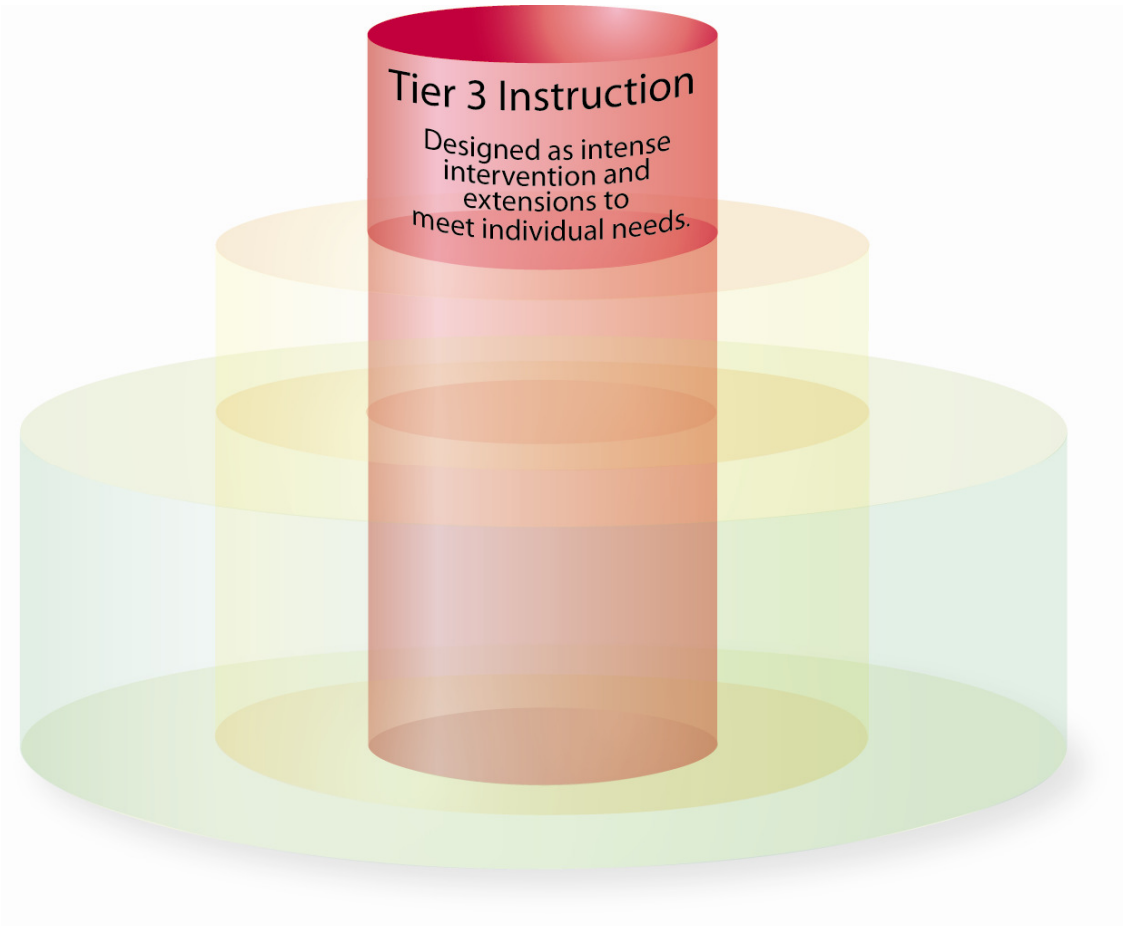
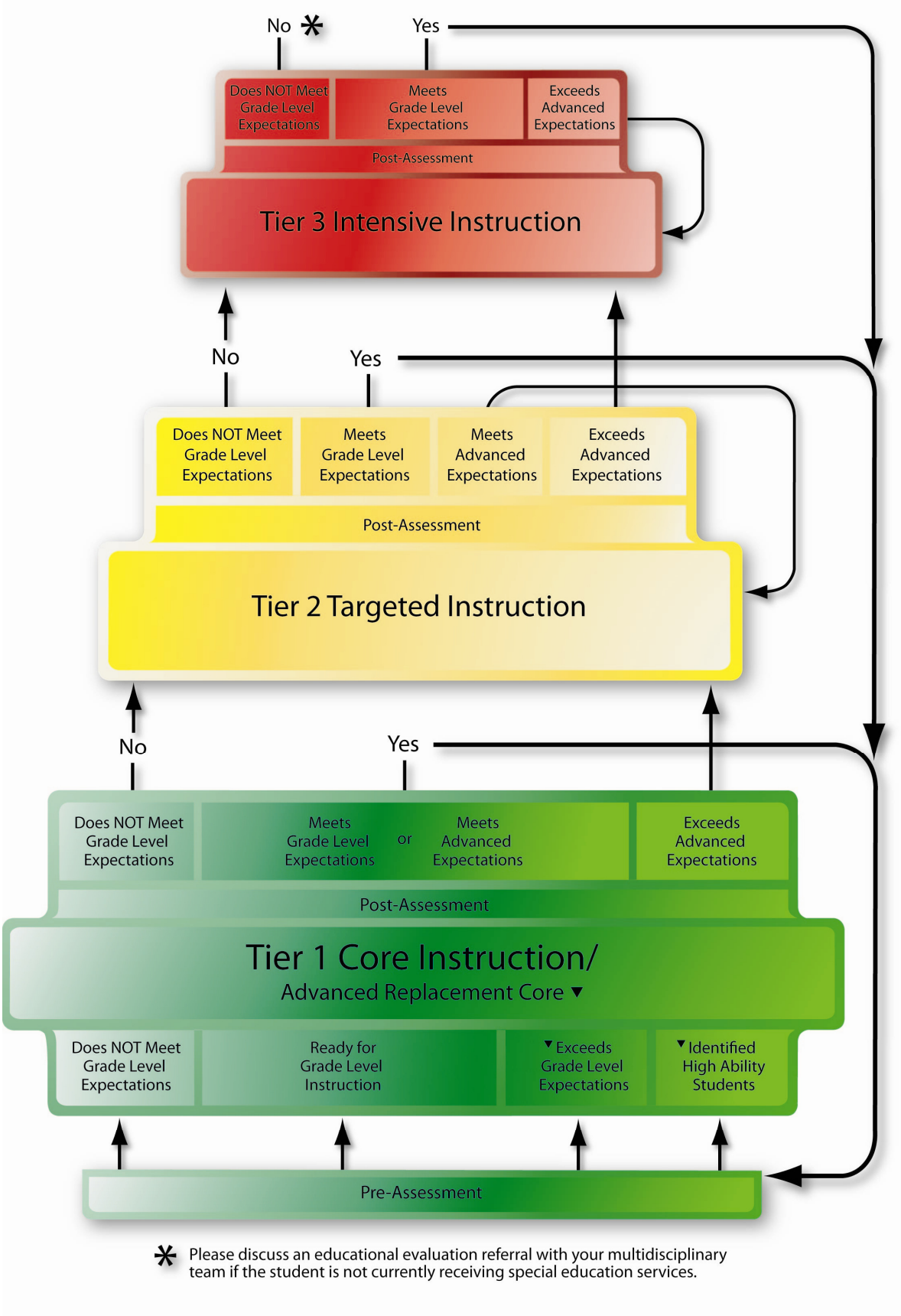


Table 4. Descriptions of Tier 3 Elements

Feature	Definition
Materials	• Research-based instructional materials selected to meet individualized needs or needs of students with significantly low or high ability as defined by contrasting age-appropriate expectations to student level of performance • Students significantly below grade level may need an intensive intervention program aligned to Tier I curriculum
Instructional Organization	• Individual or small, homogeneous groups • Explicit, intense, and scaffolded instruction • For secondary students, a specific course may be included during which intensive intervention is provided • Incorporation of multisensory approaches as appropriate • Classes specifically designed for students identified as having high intellectual abilities in a general or specific academic domain, or whole grade advancement for individuals • Critical and creative thinking appropriate in depth and intensity
Instructional Responsibility	• Highly qualified and specially trained teacher • High-ability licensed teacher for identified high-ability students grouped together in one class (cluster group, multi-age, self-contained); could be in partnership with content expert
Assessment	• Diagnostic, ongoing progress monitoring that provides data to address intense need (weekly or biweekly)
Parent Communication	• When a student experiences academic difficulty and requires an intervention that is not provided to all students in the general education classroom, written notification to inform the parent(s)/guardian is required • If a student has not made adequate progress after an appropriate period of time and has been provided with appropriate instruction as described in Article 7: Parent Notification Pertaining to Intervention/Extension Instruction, a request for an educational evaluation may be initiated (see Appendix)
Scheduling	• In addition to Tier1Instruction, students receive 30–90 minutes daily (or time according to research-based program implementation).

B. Flowchart of Instructional Decision Making

Figure 5. Flowchart of Instructional Decision Making



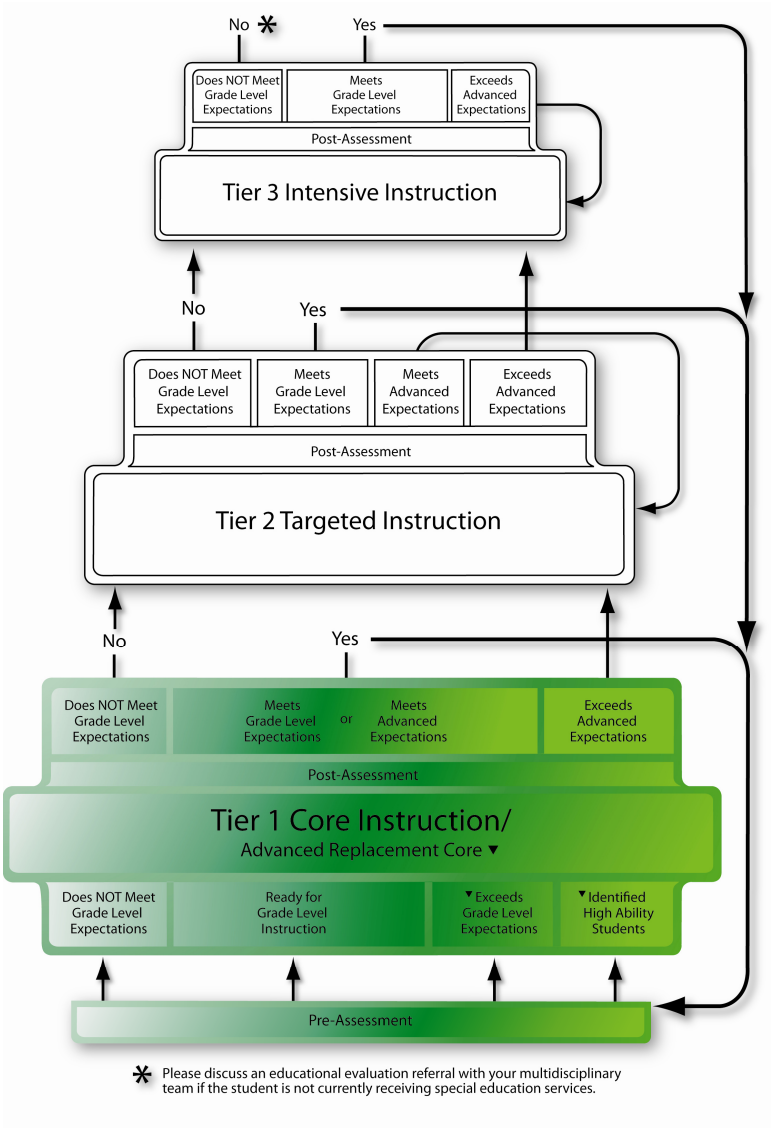
Instruction through the three tiers is a flexible and fluid process based on student assessment data and collaborative team decisions. The goal of the process is to accelerate learning so that students are able to be successful.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 examine the three tiers of *RtI*, their features, and their definitions. The use of pre-assessment data and continual progress monitoring and formative assessments are used to determine instructional decisions and apply the tier most appropriate for each student. A visual of this process of data-driven decision making is provided in Figure 5. The three tiers are clearly shown with areas used to display the decision-making process.

Tier 1 Core Instruction: Decision Making

Pre-Assessment: Pre-assessments occur before instruction takes place to determine student mastery of outlined goals, skill levels, mastery of intended content, and/or need for additional practice on foundational concepts. Examples may include, but are not limited to, end-of-unit tests, assessments on specific skills, and end-of-course assessments (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Tier 1 Core Instruction



Tier 1 Core Instruction: Decision Making (cont.)

If a student *does not meet* grade-level expectations on pre-assessment, the next steps are as follows:

1. Differentiated instruction of strategies, content, processes, and skills occurs.
2. A post assessment is given to measure student learning.
3. A) If data indicate a student still **does not** meet grade-level expectations, Tier 2 Instruction is required.

   B) If data indicate a student **does** meet grade-level expectations, Tier 1 Instruction is appropriate.

If a student is *ready for* grade-level instruction based on pre-assessment, the next steps are as follows:

1. Differentiated instruction of strategies, content, processes, and skills occurs.
2. A post assessment is given to measure student learning.
3. A) If data indicate a student **does not** meet grade-level expectation, Tier 2 Instruction is required.

   B) If data indicate a student **does** meet grade-level expectations, Tier 1 Instruction is appropriate.

If a student *exceeds* grade-level expectations on pre-assessment and is identified as having high abilities, the next steps are as follows:

1. A student receives an advanced core, which is more complex and delivered at an accelerated pace; this may include above-grade-level standards.
2. A post assessment is given to measure student learning.
3. A) If data indicate a student exceeds the advanced expectations, Tier 2 Instruction is required.

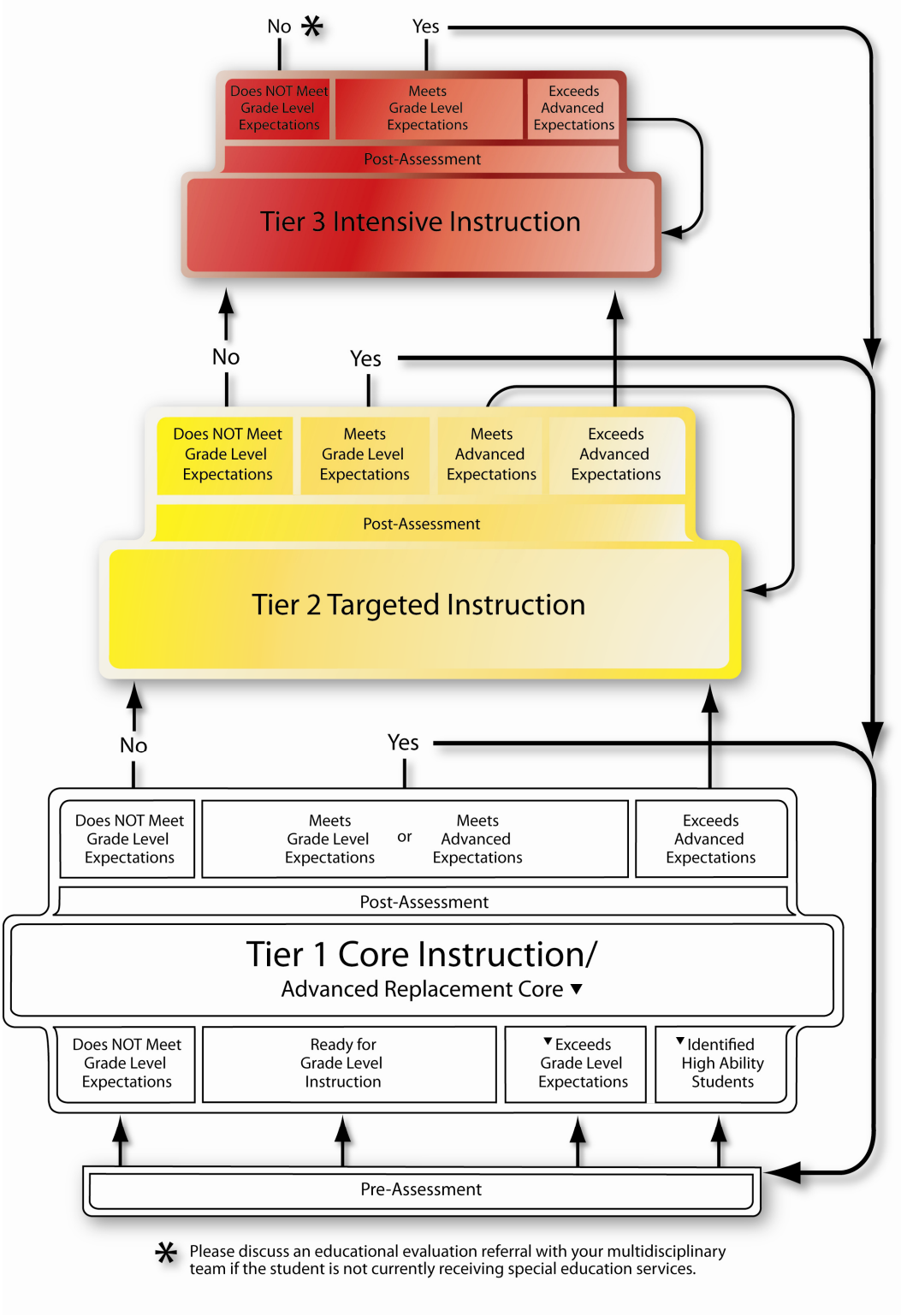
   B) If data indicate a student meets the advanced expectations, Tier1 Instruction is appropriate. Future pre-assessments may indicate the need for advanced core instruction again.

Post Assessment: Post assessments document students' level of achievement following instruction. These assessments help to guide flexible regrouping of students advancing to the next instructional topic/unit of instruction. Depending on the instructional goals, post-assessments might include curriculum-based measures, chapter tests, end-of-unit tests, or end-of-course assessments.

Tier 2 Targeted Instruction: Decision Making

A similar decision-making process follows for Tier 2 as it does for Tier 1; it is repeated a third time for those who struggle with Tier 2 support (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Tier 2 Targeted Instruction and Tier 3 Intensive Instruction



Tier 2 Targeted Instruction: Decision Making (cont.)

1. Tier 2 Instruction is scaffolded to provide additional research-based instruction beyond the core curriculum. The duration, intensity, and frequency of instruction are increased based on progress monitoring data.
2. A post assessment is given to measure student learning.
3. A) If data indicate a student still **does not** meet grade-level expectations, Tier 3 Instruction is required.

   B) If data indicate a student **does** meet grade-level expectations, Tier1 Instruction is appropriate.

Tier 2 Targeted Instruction: Advanced Core

1. For students with high abilities and others exceeding advanced expectations, Tier 2 is designed to provide further challenges that are differentiated for pace, content, and complexity.
2. A post assessment is given to measure student learning.
3. A) If data indicate a student exceeds the advanced expectations, Tier 3 Instruction is required.

   B) If data indicate a student meets the advanced expectations, Tier 2 Instruction is appropriate.

   C) If data indicate a student requires an appropriate reduction of challenge, Tier 1 Instruction is appropriate.

Tier 3 Intensive Instruction: Decision Making

1. Tier 3 Instruction involves research-based, intensive, targeted interventions for students with needs that are not adequately addressed in Tiers 1 and 2.
2. A post assessment is given to measure student learning.
3. A) If data indicate a student still **does not** meet grade-level expectations, Tier 3 Instruction continues, which could include an advanced core aligned to grade-level standards. If a related disability is suspected, a referral for educational evaluation will be appropriate.

   B) If data indicate a student **does** meet grade-level expectations, the student can be served in Tier 1 and progress monitored regularly to ensure Tier 2 or 3 services are not needed for the student to remain at grade level.

Tier 3 Intensive Instruction: Advanced Core

1. For students with high abilities and others exceeding advanced expectations, Tier 3 is designed to provide intensive instruction and/or highly individualized challenges.
2. A post assessment is given to measure student learning.
3. A) If data indicate a student meets and/or exceeds the advanced expectations, Tier 3 Instruction continues.
4. B) If data indicate a student requires an appropriate reduction of challenge, returning to Tier 1 Instruction is appropriate.

C. Problem-Solving Model

The two key components of *RtI* are data-based decision making and use of teacher groups to discuss the data and make instructional decisions together. Implementing a collaborative process to build teachers' capacity to analyze and utilize data that informs instruction may be new to some teachers and therefore, should be modeled by the instructional leaders within the school and throughout the district. Working in a group requires the development of trust and transparency and will require time. However, using a model of small group learning and decision-making can assist. One such process is the Problem Solving Model (see Figure 8). The five steps provide a means for consistently reviewing the data and determining the type and intensity of support a student needs to achieve to his/her maximum potential. Table 5 provides guiding questions for teacher teams to use.

Figure 8. Problem Solving Model

Adapted from Nellis, Collaborative Problem Solving Project

Table 5. Problem Solving Steps and Guiding Questions

Problem-Solving Steps	Guiding Questions
Step One: Defining the Problem • Compare student data with expected benchmarks and/or goals.	• Is there a gap between student data and the benchmark and/or goal? • Is further diagnosis or information needed? • What is the specific student need? • Is this an individual student learning problem or a larger systemic instructional problem, meaning many students struggled with this or this student struggles in many areas? o If it appears that the student is struggling with this one area, proceed with Step Two through Step Five. o If it appears many students are struggling, examine the curricular program to ensure it is research-based and observe the teacher's instructional practices to ensure they are research-based and implemented with fidelity. Intervene by addressing material or professional development needs.
Step Two: Analyzing the Learning • Analyze what factors contribute to the instructional area(s) of concern.	• What is/are potential underlying cause(s) of the learning problem? • Is there a health, curricular, instructional, high ability, emotional, language development, or skills gap?
Step Three: Determining What to Do • Develop a plan to address the factors hypothesized for the concern.	• What can be done to address the learning problem? • How will the plan be implemented to address instructional needs? o Document parent notification and document the steps in the plan.
Step Four: Implementing the Plan With Fidelity • Implement the developed plan with consistency and as determined necessary.	• Is the plan for instruction being implemented with fidelity at all levels? How will this be measured? • What support for implementation is available?
Step Five: Evaluating Progress • Evaluate the impact of the plan and if needs continue, develop a new plan.	• Did the intervention and extension instruction work? • What are the next steps?

The Problem Solving Model can be used in teacher meetings to review data and make instructional decisions. It is described below in terms of its use with *RtI*.

Step One: Defining the Learning Problem

The first step in the problem-solving process begins as the instructional team clearly defines the student's educational needs. Evidence is gathered by each team member and presented to the team in order to make informed decisions regarding educational programming options for the student.

Step Two: Analyzing the Learning Problem

The second step in the problem-solving process is to analyze relevant student data. It is important to utilize two types of assessment data in order to develop an overall picture of the student's academic strengths and needs. Summative data allow the members of the instructional team to see the overall strengths and needs of the student, while formative data allows them to see how the student functions on a daily or weekly basis and how the student has responded to Tier 1 Instruction. Data sources should not be limited to academic data. Teachers also need to consider health, family, or social issues that affect student learning.

Step Three: Determining What to Do

Once the student's specific educational need is identified, the instructional team plans the appropriate intervention and/or extension programming option(s). Intervention and extension programming must be researched-based and match the student's identified academic need. Team members must evaluate research literature and consider independent evaluations of curriculum to determine appropriate intervention and extension options. In addition, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other practitioners charged with implementing the intervention/extension programming must be properly trained to ensure quality and fidelity of implementation. Whether the intervention/extension is a strategy or supplemental curriculum, specific guidelines and procedures must be followed to ensure integrity. If guidelines are not carefully followed, the research base that substantiated the intervention/extension is no longer valid. Once an intervention/extension plan is outlined, a specific and measurable student goal is developed. The goal should include the personnel responsible for the intervention/extension instruction; where the instruction will occur (general education classroom, separate small group instruction, individual tutoring); when the instruction will take place; and the length of time (minutes per day, number of weeks) the intervention/extension instruction will occur.

Step Four: Implementing the Plan with Fidelity

After the instructional team has developed a plan for instruction, the next step is to implement the plan. Instruction should occur with specific attention to the implementation of the intervention/extension as it is outlined in research or professional guidelines. This component is critical and is often referred to as the "fidelity of implementation." The instruction team should consider designating one member to monitor the intervention/extension instruction to ensure fidelity of implementation. A fidelity checklist may be used to document the instruction and also be used as evidence of a student's response to instruction.

Step Five: Evaluate Student Progress

The final step of the process is to utilize student data collected during the intervention/extension instruction to make informed decisions regarding whether or not a student has made the appropriate academic progress. The team should consider all aspects of the plan's implementation and analyze all of the data collected so that a decision regarding a student's response to instruction and future instructional programming options can be determined.

D. Foundational Components of Effective Instruction

Effective and appropriate instruction based on the results of student data and embedded within a research-based core is critical to student learning and is the topic of this section. Curriculum, assessment, effective instructional practices, and the role of family and community are discussed as the foundational components.

Research-Based Core Curriculum and Intervention

Defining Core Curriculum: To succeed, students need to have a meaningful set of skills and knowledge that they are expected to learn. This set forms the core curriculum and refers to what all students are taught and expected to learn and essential questions of the content. The comprehensive curriculum is broader and includes the content designed to meet the learning needs of both struggling and advanced students (see Table 6).

Table 6. Distinctions of a Curriculum

A Curriculum Is …	A Curriculum Is Not …
Occurs through the unpacking of the state standards into a set of content and skills to be learned	A copy of the state standards or indicators
A well-conceived hierarchy of skills based on students' cognitive, language, and social emotional development	A scope and sequence chart from a publisher, chapter headings from a textbook or title of stories
Developed by all teachers working in collaborative grade-level and content-area teams	Developed by a few people in the school or district or by a publishing or textbook company
A planning and teaching tool that affects instruction and is adapted and differentiated to correspond to the needs and strengths of the learners	A document that sits on a shelf and never changes
Inclusive of essential questions, content, skills, assessments, state standards and research-based resources that teachers use in their planning and teaching	Simply a restating of the state standards
A description of the learning experiences that will result in the students demonstrating the knowledge and skills articulated in standards	A description of what the teacher will do
Aligned with state standards and across and within grade levels and content areas with increasing cognitive difficulty at each level	Individually unique with each teacher developing his or her own interpretation of the standards and without agreement within or across grade levels
Able to be differentiated to meet the needs of all learners	A one-size-fits-all approach

Determining Resources to Support Instruction and Intervention: Core curriculum and interventions are considered effective when they are rooted in research and are supported by evidence-based practices. Scientifically based research is utilized in order to eliminate weak, unsupported curriculum or interventions when determining student performance. Instructional strategies and practices within the core curriculum and interventions must match the needs of the particular population of students. To decide whether a core curriculum or intervention is effective, it is necessary that the following criteria are met: (a) the procedures are clearly articulated; (b) a process is in place to ensure that procedures are followed; (c) the correct measures are used to evaluate outcomes that result from the delivery; and (d) an appropriate means of comparing student progress both with and without the intervention in place.

The International Reading Association (2002) recommends teachers and administrators ask the following questions when reviewing reading materials; however, the same questions apply when selecting mathematics, written expression, science, and social studies materials:

- "Does this program or instructional approach provide systematic and explicit instruction in the particular strategies that have been proven to relate to high rates of achievement in reading (or another subject) for the children I teach?"
- "Does the program or instructional approach provide flexibility for use with the range of learners in the various classrooms where it will be used? Are there assessment tools that assist teachers in identifying individual learning needs? Are there a variety of strategies and activities that are consistent with diverse learning needs?"
- "Does the program or instructional approach provide a collection of high-quality materials that are diverse in level of difficulty, genre, topic, and cultural representation to meet the individual needs and interests of the children with whom it will be used?" (p. 3)

The International Reading Association (2002) offers an additional three questions for teachers and administrators to consider in terms of appropriate staffing, resources, and professional development:

- "What instructional personnel will be required to effectively implement the program or instructional approach, including skills and knowledge in what areas? That is, can the program be implemented by a classroom teacher alone, or will it require additional instructional personnel (e.g., ELL staff) and require staff with knowledge of a particular intervention?"
- "What types of professional development (and time) will be necessary for effective implementation of the program or instructional approach?"
- "What adjustments to existing academic programs and practices will be necessary for effective implementation of the program or instructional approach?" (p. 6)

Advanced Core for High Ability: Curriculum for students with high performance or the potential for high performance is qualitatively different than that designed for competent or average learners. It is different in content, in materials used, in the focus of the instructional activities, and in the types and content of assessments of learning. The content and materials should be more complex, at a more sophisticated reading level, include primary sources and be interdisciplinary when applicable. Because content is both accelerated and enriched, the content will need to be mapped at the district level or put into an articulated scope and sequence, K–12, in order to support classroom teachers with these students and to ensure that Indiana Standards have been met. Instruction is qualitatively different for students with high ability as well.

Instruction will include the differentiation needed because of previous mastery of parts of the content, and the focus of the instruction will be on the development of higher-order thinking. The pace of instruction will be faster and learning activities will emphasize problem solving, as well as critical and creative thinking. After the content and instruction are differentiated, students with high ability will require additional differentiation on the basis of varied student interests and learning styles. Assessment for students with high ability should focus on effective communication in oral, written, and visual formats of their higher levels of understanding of their advanced content.

Effective Instruction

All students have the right to receive highly effective instruction from skilled professionals. Together with the use of explicit and systematic lessons, direct instruction, and flexible groupings, students should receive effective instruction.

Highly Qualified Teachers: All Indiana teachers who teach core academic subjects (English, Reading or Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Civics and Government, Economics, History, Geography, Fine Arts and World Languages) must meet the definition of a highly qualified teacher (HQT). Indiana statutes require such teachers to minimally hold a bachelor's degree, having obtained full Indiana teacher certification for the teaching assignment(s), and demonstrating content knowledge for each core academic subject area being taught. All teachers, including elementary, middle, and high school, as well as special educators, high-ability and ELL instructors who deliver the primary instruction in core academic subject areas must meet HQT requirements.

Explicit and Systematic Lessons: Many students in Tier 2 and 3 of *RtI* will benefit from lessons that are explicitly and systematically taught. Academic failure can often be attributed to the erroneous assumption that all students know how to complete a task without explicit lessons. More than any other factor, explicit instruction is essential to student achievement. Research supports that skills, processes, strategies, and content must be explicitly and systematically taught. They must be modeled and practiced in multiple settings with a variety of materials. A gradual withdrawal of teacher support must follow until the student achieves the desired level of automaticity and is independent. Effective teachers understand the following sequential components of explicit instruction:

- **Direct Explanation**

  Teacher names and defines the skill, process, content, or strategy to be learned. This definition includes explaining why the skill or strategy is important and when it is used.

- **Teacher Modeling**

  Teacher overtly demonstrates a skill, process, content, or strategy that a student will learn. Through modeling, instruction becomes less vague and more concrete for students. Explicit instruction provides a greater likelihood that students will demonstrate mastery.

- **Guided Practice**

  Teacher provides students with support and guidance as they practice the skill or strategy independently or in small groups. Prompts, specific corrective feedback and praise related to the new skill, process, content, or strategy are provided. Teacher support gradually fades as the student takes responsibility for using the skill, process, or strategy independently.

- **Independent Practice**

  Students are provided with multiple opportunities to apply the newly acquired skill, process, content, or strategy on their own. Through independent practice, students continue to review and practice the skills, processes, strategies, and content learned.

- **Progress Monitoring**

  Teacher monitors and evaluates student mastery of the new skill, process, content, or strategy. Future instruction is designed to target skills, process, content, and strategies that require additional review and practice.

Differentiated Instruction: A third type of effective instruction is differentiated instruction, which is essential to meet the needs of all learners. It necessitates thoughtful planning of instructional tasks regarding pace, content, process, product, and environment. Starting in Tier 1, differentiated instruction is an integral part of *RtI* that requires the school community to respond to students' curricular and instructional needs. Quality decisions about the use of educational resources allow the classroom teacher to provide flexible instructional grouping. Based upon ongoing student needs, classroom teachers must be clear about what they are trying to teach and why it is relevant in order to accelerate learning and maximize student achievement. In order to facilitate differentiation for identified students with high ability and others exceeding grade-level expectations, those students are clustered in one classroom per grade or are provided a self-contained classroom for advanced instruction. This narrows the instructional range for all classrooms. The teacher of the cluster/self-contained classroom should be high-ability licensed. Instruction occurs in smaller groups with increased intensity within each tier. A highly qualified classroom teacher, in partnership with content and program area specialists, or other appropriate certified personnel, delivers Tier 2 and Tier 3 Instruction. It is recommended that ongoing progress monitoring occurs more frequently and provides the information needed to make instructional decisions.

Flexible Grouping: Flexible grouping is a differentiation strategy to be used in concert with other instructional groupings. Its purpose is to further narrow the instructional range of a group of students. After pre-assessment data delineates which students are in need of complete Tier 1 core instruction, which students are only in need of partial review, and which students have already mastered the skills or content of a topic or theme (including multiple skills). Then student groupings with similar instructional needs can be created. The process is repeated for other units, with the number of individual students varying on the topic and the individual readiness levels of the students. Flexible grouping within a heterogeneous classroom, when paired with additional best practice instruction, is an effective service delivery model to meet the needs of all learners.

Assessment

As described in data-based instructional decision making, the use of assessment data is critical in implementing effective instruction. A system of assessment and progress monitoring must occur in teaching and learning and serves as a tool to measure learning and guide decision making. Assessment data are gathered on a regular basis, and each student's progress is evaluated in order to make informed instructional and curricular decisions. The type of information collected is determined by the intended use of the results or type of decision that is needed. The specific data necessary to inform continuing instructional decisions may vary from student to student. The rigor of the assessments should lead to a more valid instructional decision. As an example, an effective skills-based reading, mathematics, or written expression program should include the following kinds of assessment: screening, pre and post, benchmark, progress monitoring, diagnostic, summative, and informal. Assessments can be used for multiple purposes.

High-ability identification assessments initially involve all children through a screening process. Students with high ability are identified through measures of potential and performance and the use of qualitative data in accordance with Indiana Code requirements. Definitions of various types of assessments are provided below. Each assessment serves a different and important purpose, including assessing students' mastery of outlined goals, skill levels, mastery of intended content, and/or need for additional practice on foundational concepts.

- **Pre-assessments** occur before instruction takes place. These help determine students' mastery or non-mastery of outlined goals or skill levels of intended content, and/or need for additional practice or advancement. Results inform groupings and content for differentiated instruction.
- **Screening assessments** involve all children and are usually given at set benchmark points, such as the beginning and middle of the school year or the end of a unit in a core program. Screenings are quick and efficient measures of overall ability or efficient measures of critical skills known to be strong indicators that predict student performance in a specific subject.
- **Diagnostic assessments** help teachers plan instruction by providing in-depth information about students' skills and instructional needs. Diagnostic assessments are individually administered and provide specific information needed to guide appropriate instruction.
- **Progress monitoring assessments** involve frequent measurement to determine whether students are demonstrating critical skills and making adequate academic progress toward a specific pre-set goal with critical skills and current instruction. These assessments should be administered as part of the instructional routine: weekly, biweekly, or monthly depending upon student need. The more intense the intervention, the more frequently progress monitoring should occur.
- **Summative assessments** provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and indicate the year-end academic achievement of students when compared to grade-level performance standards. These assessments are administered to all students at the end of a grading period and/or school year.
- **Informal assessments** provide additional information about student learning to assist educators in meeting the needs of students. Teachers and specialists often use this type of assessment to determine if further diagnostics are necessary in a certain area and to inform the need for instructional adjustments quickly.
- **Post assessments** document students' level of achievement following instruction. It helps to guide flexible regrouping of students advancing to the next instructional topic/unit of instruction. Depending on instructional goals, post assessments might include curriculum-based measures, chapter tests, end-of-unit tests, or end-of-course assessments.

Assessment Fidelity: Data generated by assessments are only as reliable as the extent to which the assessments are implemented in a consistent and standardized way. Without measuring the fidelity of assessment implementation, student responses cannot be evaluated with any reliability. Ways to verify the integrity of assessment implementation include assessor checklists, outside observations, and random checks of scoring accuracy. Of course, initial training for an assessment tool should include practice to achieve competency in administering the assessment.

Family and Community

The fourth area of maximizing student instruction is the role of family and community. The hallmarks of effective home/school collaboration include open communication and involvement of the family in all stages of the learning process. Family, school, and community partnerships need to be collaborative relationships and include activities that involve the influences and resources in students' lives to promote success and provide benefit to all partners. This includes involving the family early on when a student is struggling; providing assistance for how parents can help their children at home; and meaningfully involving families at school. For parents who do not speak English, all meetings need to be interpreted and all written communications be translated.

Understanding the cultural representation of families within the community is critical and should be supported by the school through home visits as well as culturally responsive community activities. These are essential to building trust and understanding. Partnerships are valuable and necessary in all aspects of a student's education and at all levels, including the student, classroom, school, district, and state levels. Partnerships are varied and unique reflections of student, family, school, and community characteristics. Within an *RtI* model, when a student experiences academic difficulty and requires an intervention that is not provided to all students in the general education classroom, written notification to inform the parent(s)/guardian is required. (See Appendix: Indiana Article 7: Parent Notification Pertaining to Intervention/Extension Instruction). If a student has not made adequate progress after an appropriate period of time and has been provided with appropriate instruction as described in Article 7: Parent Notification Pertaining to Intervention/Extension Instruction, a request for an educational evaluation may be initiated (see Appendix).

Implementation

A. Fidelity of Implementation

The process of *RtI* provides a continuum of services for all learners. Fidelity of implementation occurs when the method of instruction is delivered as designed. Fidelity also must address the integrity with which screening and progress monitoring procedures are completed and the extent to which an explicit problem solving model is followed. In an *RtI* model, fidelity is important at all levels. The model must be balanced with the school's existing resources. Full-scale implementation of *RtI* is achieved when a school is using data to guide instructional decisions and using research-based materials and strategies to deliver an aligned, standards-based curriculum. Only when *RtI* is implemented with high levels of procedural integrity can data be used for critical decision making.

Best practice prescribes direct and frequent evaluation of the instruction and assessments for fidelity. When evaluating the implementation of instruction and assessments, it is critical to be able to report a high level of fidelity was met in order to state that a level of correspondence occurred to increased student achievement. A list of the factors that are considered key components of *RtI* models are listed below and when implemented well, ensure that *RtI* has been implemented with fidelity.

Key Attributes

The key attributes that lead to *RtI* fidelity include the following:

- Systematic core curriculum
- Effective instruction
- Direct instruction
- Specified instructional materials
- Evaluation of key instructional practices
- A comprehensive assessment system (including all assessments referenced herein)
- Analysis of data to inform instruction
- Consistent progress monitoring
- Decisions regarding curriculum and instruction based on data
- Videos and/or observations of classroom instruction

By putting safeguards in place that increase accountability for accurate implementation, procedural integrity is monitored. Detailed record keeping is essential to document levels of procedural integrity for each child and to monitor a school's implementation strengths and weaknesses. In monitoring procedural integrity, it is helpful to use a checklist that includes the substantive procedural steps of the *RtI* process. Besides reflecting best practice, the steps safeguard children's rights. At a minimum, the *RtI* procedural checklist should address: (1) legal and ethical requirements; (2) assessment needs, including screening, baseline, and ongoing progress monitoring; (3) goal setting and plan development; (4) treatment integrity monitoring; (5) plan evaluation; and (6) planning and outcomes of decision-making meetings. Implementation of each step is recorded by team members and/or an assigned case manager and the date of completion for each step is noted. In this way, accountability is maintained and progress is monitored and recorded.

B. Plan of Action

RtI is a not a single event but a process that will be implemented and improved over time. It includes responsibilities and roles at multiple levels: IDOE, districts, schools, and *RtI* school teams. Each group needs to consider the responsibilities below and develop a process for fulfilling them.

IDOE will do the following:

- Develop regulations and policies that guide implementation of the Problem Solving Model and *Response to Instruction*.
- Provide clear criteria that support decision making rules as outlined in Article 7 regarding intervention evaluation and eligibility determination.
- Create and communicate a shared vision of *RtI* to all stakeholders.
- Identify pilot sites to monitor implementation, collect, and analyze data on student outcomes.
- Provide ongoing technical assistance, including a set of tools to schools via conferences, trainings, web-based resources and newsletters.

Participating districts will do the following:

- Identify district leadership to coordinate development and implementation efforts, including management of resources and school improvement efforts.
- Develop a plan to define how the district will coordinate the implementation of *RtI* through systemic technical assistance and professional development.
- Provide the necessary systemic supports in place to ensure that the schools are able to successfully implement *RtI* in a way that benefits all students and supports teachers and parents.
- Align the identification procedures and service delivery for students with the *RtI* framework to ensure student needs are met.
- Work with schools to identify or develop effective data management systems and support efforts to ensure efficient, timely evaluation and data collection.
- Analyze and incorporate *RtI* alignment with district improvement efforts.
- Ensure accountability, fidelity, and integrity from school and district staff.
- Communicate early and often with families and the community as to the changes that *RtI* will bring to the school and to the child's learning.
- Provide principals and other school leaders opportunities to observe and assist teachers in data meetings and grouping of students and in conducting effective observation of instructional practices.
- Provide professional development time and resources for school staff to develop skills related to data-based decision making, new instructional practices, and working together in teacher teams.

Participating schools will do the following:

- Identify a school team to provide leadership and support for the implementation of *RtI*.
- Place identified students with high ability in one cluster classroom per grade level or a self-contained classroom for advanced core curriculum.
- Evaluate core, high ability advanced core, supplemental and intensive instruction to ensure fidelity.
- Complete a self-assessment of existing *RtI* practices.
- Communicate early and often with families and the community explaining clearly the use of the tiers and the benefits for all students.
- Participate in professional development and ongoing *RtI* technical assistance.
- Allow for teachers to meet regularly to review data, develop student groupings, and discuss and increase knowledge about instructional practices.
- Collect and report student and school outcome measures.
- Analyze and incorporate *RtI* alignment with school improvement efforts.

***RtI* School Teams will do the following:**

- Participate in ongoing professional development to ensure the ability to implement interventions effectively for all students in their school.
- Meet regularly to review educational data, intervention strategies, and the effectiveness of the current school wide plan.
- Provide training to other school staff members and identify additional training needs of all school staff and parents.
- Identify a data management system that allows the team to track progress and outcomes.
- Provide leadership in the development and implementation of interventions for students.

The *RtI* School Team could include the following:

- Principal or other administrative leader
- Highly qualified classroom teacher
- Content and program area specialists (a representative from: Title I, Special Education licensed teacher, English Language Learner licensed teacher, High Ability licensed teacher, school psychologist or speech language pathologist and instructional coaches)

The focus for *RtI* school teams is to complete each step in the process with the highest level of integrity. If one or more steps are not being completed or are completed inconsistently, teams must investigate why and correct the situation. The process as a whole is as important as any one step. The educational decisions being made about students through this process significantly alter their educational future. If the process is not completed as designed, children's education may suffer.

C. Barriers to Implementation and Corresponding Solutions

As with any new process, challenges may occur in implementing *RtI* (see Table 7). All district and school teams should consider the barriers listed below and whenever possible, be proactive in addressing them before they occur.

Table 7. Possible Barriers and Corresponding Solutions

Barriers	Recommended Strategies
Misconception of *RtI*'s purpose as an eligibility determination model (e.g., for special education)	Build awareness and understanding that *RtI* is a model for instruction
Underdeveloped capacity of leadership to successfully implement *RtI*	Ongoing professional development to deepen understanding of *RtI* and to ensure fidelity of implementation including ability to observe and coach teachers in their *RtI* work
Lack of depth of understanding of differentiated instruction	Continuing commitment to professional growth in differentiated instructional practices for all student groups
Lack of data analysis to drive instruction	Evaluate assessment tools, processes and products to ensure valid data collection and effective delivery of differentiated instruction; Ensure teachers have the ability to disaggregate student data to make instructional decisions
Schedule restrictions	Allow for flexibility to coordinate efforts of grade-level planning and instructional delivery methods such as cross grade-level grouping, flexible classroom grouping, between class grouping and/or multi-age classes
Current economic climate and staffing constraints	Utilize and develop personnel strengths to ensure full staff engagement and integration of services; Principals and other school leaders work with teachers to hold effective, collaborative student-centered meetings
Limited number of endorsements/ licensures for teachers of specialized populations, (e.g., ELL, high-ability, special education).	Support and encourage teachers to gain needed credentials in order to serve specialized populations.

Leadership

Leadership at all levels of the educational system is *the* critical and underlying foundation for the successful development and implementation of *RtI*. Without strong leadership at every level, the process will fail. Leaders who have the ability to create positive acceptance of this initiative and who are knowledgeable about its implementation must emerge in all Indiana schools and districts as well as at the state level. Each level has a set of specific roles to ensure that support and direction is clearly and consistently provided.

A. The Role of School Leaders

Strong school leadership is imperative for successful student learning. In fact, "…leadership…is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning…the impact of the leadership tends to be greatest in schools where the learning needs of the students are the most acute" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3).

RtI is focused on the learning of *all* students. As principals and other school leaders are second, only to teaching, in impacting student learning, the school leadership's role cannot be understated. The most critical roles for the principal, as the primary school leader, are to do the following:

- Create a vision for change and a culture of collaboration.
- Promote a school-wide belief that all students can and will meet rigorous achievement goals.
- Provide time for teachers and staff to meet regularly to discuss curriculum, instructional practices, assessments, student data, achievement goals, and student groupings.
- Allow for changes in schedules to accommodate *RtI*.
- Attend data meetings, assist teachers in problem-solving through data analysis, and demonstrate knowledge of student trends and academic needs throughout the year.
- Provide professional development in specific areas related to implementing *RtI* and meeting student goals through teacher collaborative meetings, mentoring, and coaching.
- Monitor and improve the fidelity of agreed-upon implementations and interventions by conducting classroom and student group walk-throughs and participating in data, student goal setting, and planning meetings.

Principals must develop school teams to share these responsibilities. These teams should be data and instructionally focused and must assist with problem solving, increasing instructional fidelity, and developing a new schedule to accommodate the three tiers of *RtI*.

Team membership should include highly qualified classroom teachers, content and program area specialists, or other appropriate personnel, including the principal. School teams are beneficial as they provide essential on-site support and accountability to other teachers and increase teachers' ownership of problems and solutions.

B. The Role of District Leaders

School leaders depend on district leaders to provide them with guidance and support, especially with new approaches such as *RtI*. The number of district staff who provides that support varies greatly between urban and rural areas. No matter the number of staff, the message the district sends and the supports it provides to staff for the development and implementation of *RtI* sets the tone in the schools, in the community, and with the students. A positive message, including emphasis on the benefits of *RtI* and on the fact that many schools already have some of the components in place, is a major responsibility of the district.

As with the school teams, districts with individual coordinators of various programs must form *RtI* teams to work together to assist schools and provide support to school-based teams. The district leadership team must collaborate in order to determine the most effective way to combine resources and serve as a model for the schools. The most critical roles at the district level include the following:

- Prioritize and provide resources long-term to ensure district and school administrators, teachers and staff receive the time they need to work together to learn and successfully implement *RtI*.
- Provide principals and school leaders with opportunities to gain knowledge and skills in order to model, coach, and mentor teachers and staff in implementing *RtI*.
- Provide a district wide, evidence-based core curriculum.
- Assist principals to ensure that teachers receive research-based professional development in implementing *RtI*.
- Consolidate and/or eliminate current programs and practices to align with *RtI*.
- Inform and educate parents and the community on *RtI* and the benefits for all students.
- Continue to assess and review *RtI* implementation at each school and make changes to increase the potential for success.
- Set grade-level and building-level student achievement goals.

C. The Role of State Leaders

The state's leadership role is to establish guidance and provide support to schools and districts in implementing *RtI*. More specifically the role of IDOE includes the following:

- Provide guidance, including *RtI*'s relationship to state or federal laws or policies.
- Determine and provide professional development through multiple means that correspond to student achievement data.
- Provide formative assessments.
- Develop and disseminate handouts, templates, research summaries, and other tools to assist with the implementation and sustainability of *RtI*.

D. Leadership for Change: Strong and Bold

Effective leaders act boldly and quickly. They take the lead in creating change that will benefit learners; they do not take the "wait and see" approach. Quick and dramatic improvement in student achievement, especially in low-performing schools, occurs when school leaders:

- Signal the need for dramatic change with strong leadership.
- Maintain a consistent focus on improving instruction. Analyze student achievement data in order to re-assess student learning and refocus goals.
- Make visible improvements early in the school turnaround process.
- Build a committed staff (Herman et al., 2008, p. 8).

Although not all schools need to be "turned-around," all schools need to ensure that all students are learning to their maximum potential.

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Resource

A suggested resource for schools and districts is the national assistance center listed below.

The National Center on Response to Intervention
http://www.rti4success.org

Appendix

Indiana Article 7: Parent Notification Pertaining to Intervention/Extension Instruction

511 IAC 7-40-2 Comprehensive and coordinated early intervening services

(f) The parent of a student who participates in a process that assesses the student's response to scientific, research based interventions must be provided with written notification when a student requires an intervention that is not provided to all students in the general education classroom. The written notification must contain the following information:

(1) The:

(A) Amount and nature of student performance data that will be collected; and

(B) General education services that will be provided.

(2) The evidence-based strategies that will be utilized for increasing the student's rate of learning to grade level.

(3) The parent's right to request an educational evaluation to determine eligibility for special education and related services.

(4) An explanation that:

(A) the public agency will initiate a request for an educational evaluation if the student fails to make adequate progress after an appropriate period of time, as determined by the parent and the public agency, when provided with scientific, research based interventions; and

(B) When the public agency initiates a request for an educational evaluation under clause

(A), the public agency will provide written notice to the parent regarding the evaluation before requesting written parental consent for the evaluation as specified in section 4 of this rule. After obtaining written parental consent, the public agency must evaluate the student and convene the CCC within twenty (20) instructional days.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Special Education

Q: ***If a student has experienced solid instruction and still continues to struggle even with intense instruction in the third tier, does this mean that the student qualifies for special education?***

A: If a student is having difficulty in school, it may be due to the presence of a disability. In order to be eligible for special education, a student must have an identified disability and that disability must adversely affect the student's academic and/or functional performance. This is determined by a multidisciplinary team through an educational evaluation.

The presence of some disabilities is more difficult to affirm than others. For example, a specific learning disability is one eligibility area that depends most heavily on academic performance data. The difference between acceptable achievement and data on the student's progress serves as a key piece of evidence that the disability exists. This measurement of academic performance can be affected by a number of environmental variables such as the quality of the educational experience. However, there is ample evidence that early intervention in areas like reading can have a lifelong effect in correcting a learning problem and potentially avoid identification for special education.

Among other reasons to maintain a strong instructional program, an *RtI* process helps to scientifically examine the indelibility of a learning problem. Through the systematic application of a process of instructional strategies and intensifying interventions, a team of educators can eliminate inadequate instruction as the root cause. If the difficulty persists, the data from the interventions will contribute to the educational evaluation and support a more accurate analysis in order to make the determination if the student is eligible for special education services.

RtI should not be "the thing we have to do before we put the student in special education." However, following a responsive application of robust instruction and scientific intervention, the data may suggest that the student is entitled to the special education services and the protections afforded in Article 7 / IDEA. A parent may give consent for an educational evaluation, which must then take place within 20 days of receiving the consent. The shortened timeline is due to the assumption that much data have been gathered on the student through the *RtI* process. The student is considered eligible only after the case conference committee reviews the educational evaluation, decides that a disability is indeed present, and concludes that this disability adversely affects the student's performance.

There are students with a variety of disabilities who are best served in all levels of the *RtI* system of instruction. If a parent requests an evaluation for a student receiving Tier 1, 2, or 3 Instruction, and the student is making adequate progress, the school may agree to complete the educational evaluation. The 50-day timeline will apply in this case rather than the 20-day timeline. *RtI* activities can continue throughout this evaluation phase to contribute more information in support of the determination process.

Q*: What are the steps a school must take after a parent has indicated a desire for an educational evaluation?*

A: A parent of a student may initiate a request for an educational evaluation at any time to determine if a student is eligible for special education. Please refer to 7-40-4 in Article 7. As a school official, you are responsible for accepting this request and assuring that your public agency respond back to the parent within 10 days with the intent to either evaluate or refuse to evaluate. Some schools use this time to discuss opportunities to try targeted interventions for an identified period of time before starting the evaluation process.

The use of *RtI* would be a school-based decision defined by a process that measures the student's response to scientific, research-based intervention. The intention of the law is not to delay evaluations by requiring an intervention process if it is not believed that it is likelihood that interventions could make a difference. However, if you have a process that you believe could serve to address a weakness before the student is identified as a student with special needs, providing this for your students, particularly at the time of a parental request, would be a reasonable service.

English Language Learners

Q*: For English Language Learners (ELLs), does Tier 1 Instruction replace the English Language Development (ELD) services that these students would regularly receive?*

A: No. ELD services must be provided in addition to, and regardless of, any other Tier 1 *RtI* interventions. One hour of daily English language development instruction is recommended to meet the state requirement for school corporations to provide appropriate instruction to ELL students. 511 IAC 6.1-5-8. For ELL students at Level 1 - 4, the focus of instruction would be content-based English language development, integrating all language domains. For ELL students at Level 3 and Level 4, the focus would be on reading and writing development. At high school, ELD is to be provided through an English as a New Language (ENL #1012) course for English/language arts credit, sheltered content instruction, or push-in content area support. ELL teachers and classroom teachers must work collaboratively to ensure that ELD is embedded within content area instruction is aligned based on each ELL student's needs and level of English proficiency.

Q: ***Most ELLs at Levels 1–3 of English proficiency perform below grade level because of the 5–7 year timeframe to develop academic language proficiency. Based on this data, does this mean that these ELL students will received Tier 2 Instruction in additional to Tier 1 Instruction?***

A: Data should be reviewed for each ELL student to determine if Tier 2 Instruction is appropriate. The focus of Tier 2 Instruction for ELL students is to accelerate English language development and improve content knowledge through vocabulary, grammar, and language structure instruction to increase reading comprehension and improve writing. Oral language development along with high-quality literacy instruction should be the basis of this instruction. Data from the LAS Links English proficiency assessment and formative assessments such as the LAS Links Benchmark Assessment should be integrated into each ELL student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

Q: ***Which ELL students would be most likely to participate in Tier 3 Instruction?***

A: Tier 3 Instruction is for students that are performing below two or more grade levels and provides intensive intervention to target specific, individual needs. Secondary ELL students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) or older ELLs (age 14 or older) with very low levels of English proficiency would benefit from this type of instruction in place of grade-level content area courses delivered through sheltered content courses, content remediation courses to bring basic skills up to grade level, or an ELL newcomer program in addition to Tier 1 Instruction. The newcomer program would provide intensive English language development and content remediation to accelerate oral language and literacy for a limited time, typically up to one year, until students are ready to transition into Tier1 Instruction.

Resources are available at IDOE website:
http://www.doe.in.gov/lmmp/pdf/effective_programs_ell.pdf
http://www.doe.in.gov/lmmp/pdf/ELL_literacy_development.pdf
http://www.doe.in.gov/lmmp/pdf/English_Language_Learners_Instruction_and_Assessment.pdf
http://www.doe.in.gov/lmmp/pdf/content_area_texts.pdf

Q: ***In the RtI model, who is responsible for providing instruction to ELL students?***

A: Highly qualified classroom teachers provide core instruction and an ELL teacher with specialized training provides ELD instruction and coordinates with classroom teachers to implement the tiers of instructional support. Students must receive instruction from properly certified, licensed teachers. 511 IAC 6.1-3-1(d). Schools should review their resources to determine the best use of staff to meet the needs of ELL students within each tier of instruction. Instructional aides must work under the direct supervision of a certified teacher and should not have the sole responsibility of teaching units of study. 511 IAC 1-8-7.5.

Assignment code resources are available at IDOE website:
http://www.doe.in.gov/educatorlicensing/teach_with_license.html

Q: ***What types of instructional materials should be used for ELL students?***

A: Research-based English language development instructional materials should be selected to meet individualized needs and be based on English proficiency levels. High-quality materials must be used to develop oral and written academic English language proficiency (vocabulary, grammar, and language structure) across the domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Indiana English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards also must be used to guide instruction. For ELL students with literacy in their native language, native language instructional materials and/or certified bilingual staff may be used to transfer concepts and skills.

Q: ***When should ELL students be scheduled for Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention instruction to allow meaningful participation in core instruction?***

A: ELL students participate in the 90 minute reading block and the 60 minute math block. Any ELD instruction provided in a pull-out setting, rather than a push-in setting, would need to be scheduled during other less language intensive content area instruction or during electives/specials. Schools should also utilize any available times during the school day (i.e., 15 minutes before home room, etc.) to accommodate Tier 2 and Tier 3 Instruction.

Glossary

Accelerated Pace
Accelerated pace refers to the faster rate of introduction of new topics or the reduced amount of time devoted to a topic or an assignment before mastery is attained. Because students with high ability require many fewer repetitions to commit a concept to long-term memory than the average learner, new topics can be introduced more frequently. In addition, these students can generally read faster and with better comprehension, enabling them to spend more time discussing the ideas in what they have read, instead of just decoding and comprehending what they have read.

Acceleration
One of as many as 18 types of modifications for students in which less total time is spent in the K–12 sequence or in which topics are studied at a younger age than is typical. Examples: early entrance to kindergarten, early graduation from high school, grade skipping, subject skipping, curriculum compacting, Advanced Placement courses.

Accommodation
Changes in instruction that enable students to demonstrate their abilities in the classroom or the assessment/testing setting and are designed to provide equity, not advantage, for students with disabilities. Accommodations might include assistive technology as well as alterations to presentation, response, scheduling, or settings. When used appropriately, they reduce or even eliminate the effects of a child's disability, but do not reduce or lower the standards or expectations for content. Accommodations that are appropriate for assessments do not invalidate assessment results.

Achievement
Achievement is a measurement of proficiency within a subject area; the result gained by effort; to attain a desired end or aim; a special skill or ability acquired by training or practice.

Advanced Core
Curriculum for students with high performance or the potential for high performance is qualitatively different than that designed for average learners seeking competence on grade-level standards. It is different in content, in materials used, in the focus of the instructional activities, and in the types and content of assessments of learning. The content and materials are more complex, at a more sophisticated reading level, include primary sources and are interdisciplinary when applicable. Instruction includes the differentiation needed because of previous mastery of parts of the content, and the focus is on the development of higher order thinking. The pace of instruction is accelerated. Learning activities emphasize problem solving, critical and creative thinking. Assessments focus on effective communication in oral, written, and visual formats, of students' higher levels of understanding of advanced content.

Appropriate Progress
Reference that compares the progress of the student to a level of performance that would be considered adequate in order to determine a problem has been corrected.

Core Assessments
Core assessments are formal and informal ways of determining students' level of achievement following core instruction based upon state standards.

Core Curriculum
Core curriculum refers to what all students are taught and expected to learn based upon state standards.

Core Instruction
Instruction provided to all students in the class using research-based strategies selected to meet the needs of students and the content being presented.

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)
CBM is an approach to measurement that is used to screen students or to monitor student progress in mathematics, reading, writing, and spelling. With CBM, teachers and schools can assess individual responsiveness to instruction. When a student proves unresponsive to the instructional program, CBM signals the teacher/school to revise that program. CBM is standardized, with its reliability and validity well documented.

Diagnostic Assessment
Diagnostic assessments help teachers plan instruction by providing in-depth information about students' skills and instructional needs. Diagnostic assessments are individually administered and provide specific information needed so that instruction can be more precisely planned.

Differentiated Instruction
Differentiated instruction is the process of matching instruction to meet the different needs of learners in a given classroom.

Duration
Along with the initiation date, the duration describes the length of the intervention in terms of days, weeks, or months.

Effective Teacher
An effective teacher means a teacher whose students, overall and for each subgroup, demonstrate acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth. School corporations may supplement this definition as they see fit so long as teacher effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth. (See Highly Effective)

English Language Development (ELD)
English language development refers to the required instructional services for English language learner students to develop oral and written academic English language proficiency (vocabulary, grammar, and language structure) across the domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing, delivered by qualified staff through in-class (push-in), pull-out, or scheduled courses.

English Language Learner (ELL)
A student whose native language is other than English classified as Level 1-4, limited English proficient, or Level 5, fluent English proficient, based on the LAS Links English proficiency assessment.

Evidence-Based
A particular program or collection of instructional practices that have a record of success. There is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in achievement.

Extensions
Extension are additional material or learning activities related to the content that may or may not be at a higher level of instruction or understanding than what is appropriate for the individual learner. Extensions may be additional topics within the same content area or extensions into related disciplines and may involve student choice.

Fidelity
The accurate and consistent delivery of instruction in the manner in which it was designed or prescribed according to research findings and/or developers' specifications.

Formative Assessment
With formative assessment, student progress is systematically assessed to provide continuous feedback to both student and the teacher concerning learning successes and failures. With formative assessment, teachers diagnose skill, ability, and knowledge gaps, measure progress, and evaluate instruction. Formative assessments are not necessarily used for grading purposes. Examples include (but are not limited to): CBM, pre/post tests, benchmark assessments, quizzes, teacher observations, and teacher/student conferencing.

Formative Assessment
Formative assessment is the evaluation of student learning that aids understanding and development of knowledge, skills and abilities without passing any final judgement (via recorded grade) on the level of learning.

Frequency
Frequency refers to how often a service or intervention is provided (e.g., daily).

Highly Effective
A highly effective teacher means a teacher whose students achieve high rates (e.g., more than one grade level in an academic year) of student growth. School corporations may supplement this definition as they see fit so long as teacher effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth.

Individual Learning Plan (ILP)
A record-keeping document developed for each English language learner, outlining the students' level of English proficiency and instructional and assessment adaptations. The ILP is developed by the ELL teacher in collaboration with the classroom teacher and updated annually based on LAS Links English proficiency assessment overall and domain scores.

Intensity
Focused instruction where students are actively engaged with the content and the teacher followed by opportunities to practice with immediate teacher feedback.

Length
How long a service, intervention or instructional event lasts according to research-based program implementation guidelines (e.g., 15, 30, 60 minutes).

Modification
Alterations that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations according to an IEP; for high-ability students, alterations that raise the intellectual level of demand.

Pre-assessment
Pre-assessments occur before instruction takes place. These help determine students' mastery or non-mastery of outlined goals or skill levels of intended content, and/or need for additional practice or advancement. Results inform groupings and content for differentiated instruction.

Post Assessment
Assessments that occur after instruction takes place to determine students' mastery or non-mastery of outlined goals or skill levels of intended content and inform next steps.

Progress Monitoring
Progress monitoring is used on a regular basis (weekly, biweekly, monthly) to assess students' academic performance and to quantify a student rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction. These assessment results provide a quick feedback to determine whether children are profiting appropriately from the typical instructional program and to make adjustments for children who are not succeeding.

Rigor
A desired high level of expected student performance; curriculum, instruction and assessment should be aligned with the same level of rigor to ensure high levels of student performance.

Scaffolding
The use of an adult or another student to assist a student in receiving assistance that is one small step above what the student can do alone. Renowned educational theorist Lev Vygotsky used the equation *i + 1* to describe the task the student could do alone as "*i"* plus the other person's slight level of assistance as "*1*."

School Teams
A group of educators who have the expertise to examine student data and classroom instruction and make recommendations for instruction for students. The team make-up can vary depending on the needs of the student and the availability of staff expertise. Team members could include the classroom teacher, instructional coach, Special Education teacher, ELL teacher, content expert, instructional assistant, and principal. Those involved in implementing services should always be included.

Scientifically Based Research
Ensures that programs for students are based on methods that have been proven effective and are therefore more likely to benefit other children, with the goal of increasing the overall quality of education research. According to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, the following principles define scientific quality:

- Use of the scientific method with an emphasis on experimental control (or comparison) groups
- Replication of results, using multiple studies by different investigators
- Ability to generalize results from one sample to other children in the general population
- Fulfillment of rigorous standards with an emphasis on peer review
- Consistency of results between studies

Significant Cognitive Disabilities
Students with significant cognitive disabilities have been determined to meet the criteria to participate in the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards. The cognitive disabilities of these students have been determined to preclude the achievement of grade-level proficiency. It is expected that includes less than 1 percent of the student population.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
The IDEA definition of a Specific Learning Disability, as authorized in 2004, is as follows: "The child does not achieve adequately for the child's age or to meet state approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas, when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child's age or grade-level standards: (1) Oral Expression, (2) Listening Comprehension, (3) Written Expression, (4) Basic Reading Skill, (5) Reading Fluency Skills, (6) Reading Comprehension, (7) Mathematics Calculation, (8) Mathematics Problem Solving."

Summative Assessment
Summative assessments provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and indicate the year-end academic achievement of students when compared to grade-level performance standards. These assessments are administered to all students at the end of a grading period and/or school year.

Systemic Process
A process that unifies actions and is integrated throughout the framework of the system in contrast to an activity that is a separate add-on.

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